
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Over-the-Rhine (OTR) Community Plan that follows was created out of the passion, drive and commitment of many existing neighborhood residents, business owners, property owners, social service providers, development corporations, community business interests and the many other stakeholders who love OTR. It is also a plan that was developed during a time of great stresses and pressures in the community.

The plan recommendations focus on revitalizing the neighborhood using the many significant assets of this community:

- Committed residents and stakeholders
- Rich and diverse arts and cultural community
- Distinct historic architecture
- Place in the city's heritage as the home to Findlay Market and Music Hall
- Location in between downtown and the University/ Medical Complex

The plan's recommendations also directly confront challenges facing the neighborhood:

- Disinvestment
- The loss of population and economic activity
- Crime and the perception and reality of an unsafe and unhealthy environment
- Concentrations of poverty
- Lack of mutual respect and community cohesion in a racially and economically diverse neighborhood

The plan's recommendations are designed to rebuild the housing and economic infrastructure of the neighborhood in a way that will create an economically and racially diverse community that can be sustained over the long term. The public and private investments being made in public schools, the arts, parks and the Findlay Market revitalization enhance rebuilding the housing and economic markets.

Phase one housing projects are designed to take advantage of the public investments in schools and parks, as well as Findlay Market. Economic improvements are targeted to Vine Street, the Loft District and Main Street. In addition to the bricks and mortar improvements recommended, there are support services recommended for expanded homeownership opportunities and rental assistance in the area of housing. There are job and personal financial management training recommendations along with business development and retention strategies in the economic development arena.

Plan implementation focuses on the central management of the process in the community by a development corporation that has as its membership the many stakeholders that have been working in the neighborhood for years, both for profit and non-profit, residents and business. The plan focuses new funding tools like TIF district designation and the Urban Living Loan Pool (a private fund) along with better focused and packaged existing tools like the Housing Round, Cincinnati Neighborhood Business Districts United (CNBDU), rental rehabilitation and homeowner assistance programs.

The following Future Land Use Map and Strategic Plan Map illustrate this plan's recommendations spatially and its vision for the neighborhood's revitalization.

The **Future Land Use Map** illustrates six kinds of areas in OTR:

1. The **residential and commercial mixed-use** areas include a large percentage of buildings designed with office or retail space on the first floor and housing in the floors above. Densely packed, these buildings are generally three- to five-stories in height with long, narrow floor plates. The future land use plan for OTR respects these building types and therefore envisions higher-density rental housing and, in some cases, condominiums in these areas. Provisions for commercial and office uses in street level storefronts, as well as alternative uses of the upper floors for office and studio space, are also made in these areas.
2. The **residential/medium-density** areas represent places where residential reuses will be created at a lower-density level. The buildings in these areas lend themselves more to single- and two-family housing, and homeownership will be encouraged. Since there are fewer opportunities for commercial concerns, the overall character of these parts of the neighborhood will be strongly residential.
3. The **loft district** is intended to encompass a wide variety of businesses and housing opportunities including office/commercial, light manufacturing, artists' studios, and housing. Older manufacturing and industrial buildings, with their large open floor plates and massive windows, present limitless opportunities for creative and unique developments. The loft district extends west out of OTR into the West End where similar recommendations are being made in that neighborhood.
4. The social, educational and cultural **institutions** illustrated in the Future Land Use Map represent some of the community's most important anchors. The continued presence of these organizations is essential to its overall revitalization.
5. The **retail mixed-use** zones target Main Street, Vine Street and Findlay Market. These areas are OTR's focal points, the location of many local and regional businesses. Main Street, Vine Street and Findlay Market are envisioned as active, lively business zones that also include housing. Vine Street includes the core of the neighborhood's local businesses, while Main Street is a destination for entertainment, arts, and specialty goods and services. Findlay Market is a food and flowers district that is eventually seen as a daily market for residents of Over-the-Rhine and outlying neighborhoods with additional restaurants and housing.
6. **Open spaces** in the neighborhood are very important gathering spaces and places to slow down in this otherwise dense neighborhood. Open spaces utilized for gardens and parks also provide food, greenery and color to street faces.

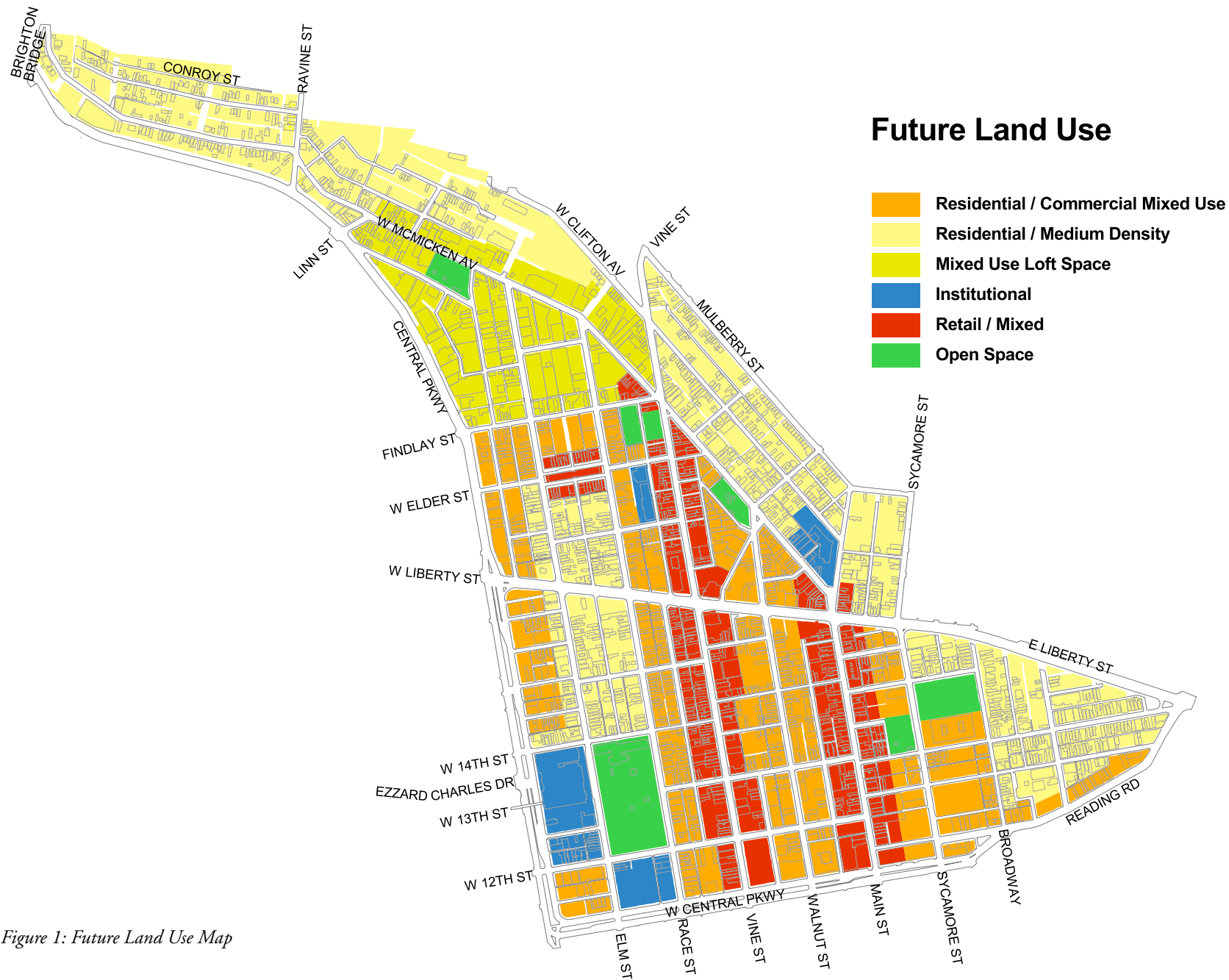


Figure 1: Future Land Use Map

The **Strategic Plan Map** identifies those areas in which to focus initial redevelopment efforts. The project locations shown begin to implement key recommendations in the plan, and a review of this map shows that every part of the neighborhood plays an important role. Plan recommendations are designed to build on both existing assets, such as Music Hall, and future investments, such as those planned by Cincinnati Public Schools. Recommendations are also intended to target rehabilitation and new construction to take advantage of vacant land and existing building types.

Plans for the “Loft District” include the rehabilitation of a series of buildings for mixed-uses including housing, commercial office space and studio space. The plan also includes improvements to Hanna Park as part of the Armleder Trust through the City of Cincinnati Recreation Commission. The illustrations included in this plan give an indication of the opportunities for associated parking and open space.

The “Infill Housing” proposed in the northern part of the neighborhood involves the construction of new single- and two-family housing on the many available lots along Mulberry Street, Clifton Avenue and smaller streets extending up the hillside.

Improvements in the “Rothenberg Area” will center around a newly renovated Rothenberg elementary school. This will include expanded green space and parking for the school. This area is also targeted for housing renovation and in-fill development. Housing developments undertaken nearby Rothenberg school should incorporate larger units to accommodate families with children.

The future “Melindy Square” project will take advantage of the mixed-use buildings in this part of OTR to create approximately 80 new mixed-income housing units.

The “Washington Park Area / SCPA Area” encompasses a new Washington Park School and a new K-12 Arts School. Recommendations for this area also include some targeted mixed-income housing rehabilitation that will include buildings along Race Street and Republic Street.

The 1700 block of Vine Street is one focus for retail and commercial rehabilitation activity. The block is undergoing improvements because of improvements to Smart Money, and the stabilization of the old Kauffman building. Additional improvements will include shared parking and retail space renovation. There are also improvements proposed to better connect Vine Street to Findlay Market in this location.

Findlay Market is the location of another targeted renovation project. The market house renovation is well underway. The expansion of the market space will also spur expanded hours of operation and a new management structure for the market. In addition, renovation of the buildings around the market house for retail and residential use is also underway.

The Pendleton Mews housing project will provide 20 new single-family units in a part of the neighborhood identified for those types of new uses. The streetscape and lighting improvements associated with this project will also be included.

The south Vine Street area includes a number of renovation projects that will provide new retail and housing space. The ReSTOC project in the 1300 block will provide 35 new affordable units while the activity on the 1200 block will provide additional new market rate units and both will provide renovated retail space.

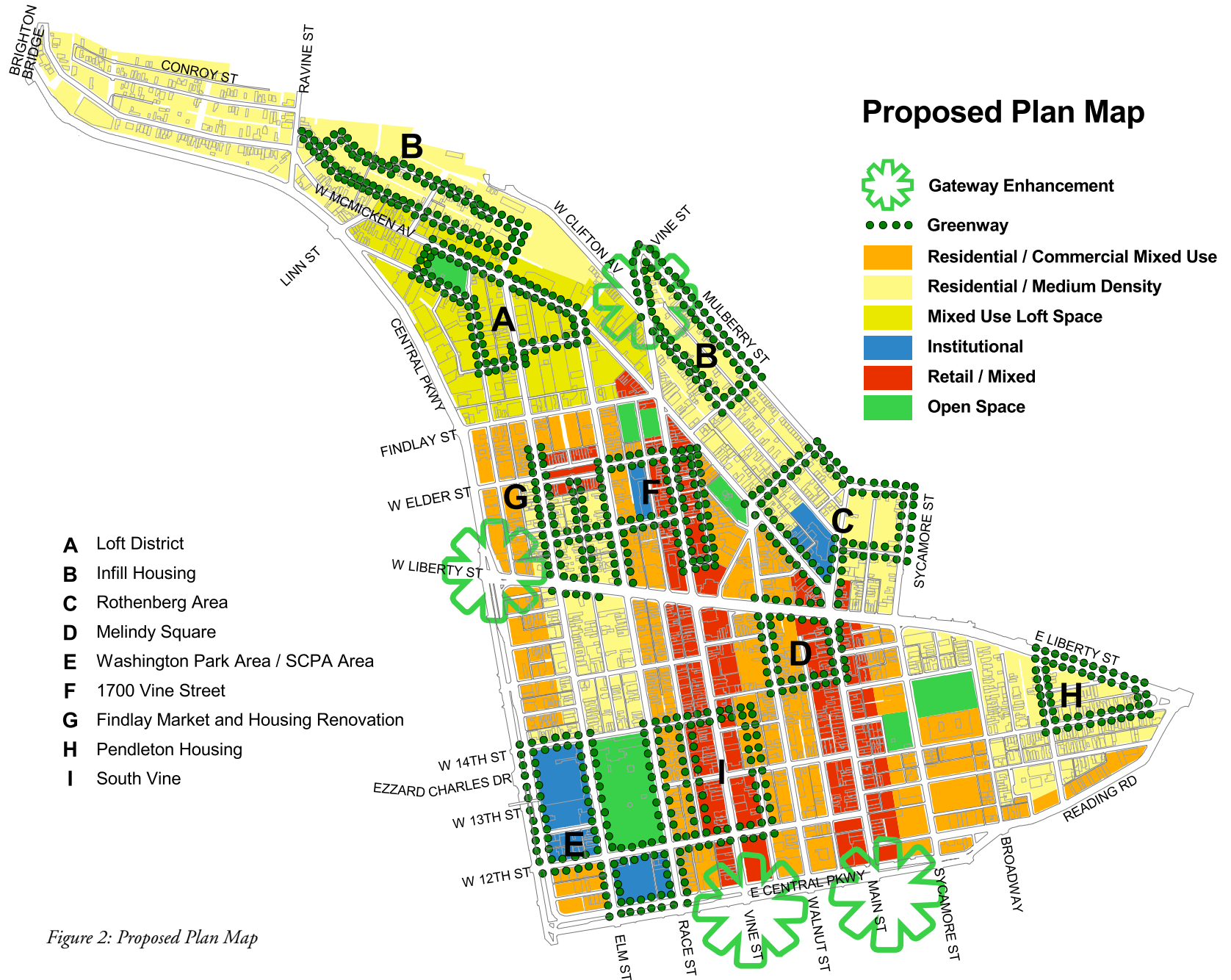


Figure 2: Proposed Plan Map



Policy measures should focus on retaining existing commercial activity wherever it exists in accordance with the general intention of maintaining an active mixed-use environment in OTR. Concentration of commercial opportunities along certain streets should be encouraged to create a critical mass of commercial activity that may be better self-supporting, can benefit from shared parking, and is in a smaller area, rather than spread thinly about the district.

Even along designated commercial streets, focus complementary retail development and retention efforts in smaller stretches that may be supported by their own “critical mass.” For example, land use around Findlay Market and the spine of Elder Street constitute the OTR Findlay Market District’s most important commercial activity. Commercial vitality along Vine Street north of Liberty is intermittent. New retail commercial activity should be concentrated near Elder Street on Vine Street, to maximize the critical mass of business here and to capitalize on retail traffic generated by Findlay Market.

Providing parking throughout OTR is critical to the vitality of all neighborhood business enterprises, especially Findlay Market, as well as to the viability of existing and new housing opportunities. Small areas of surface parking are acceptable uses in each sub-neighborhood, as long as they are compatible with surrounding buildings and pedestrian spaces. Dispersing all types of parking promotes pedestrian traffic that may support business activity and street vitality throughout. Wherever possible, parking should be located underground below other uses, such as housing. Independent aboveground parking structures may be appropriate in areas that are more commercial. Such parking concentrations should be distributed strategically in locations that serve the highest demand. The location and design of parking should be related to the neighborhood uses.

In areas of highest concentrated demand, (along Vine, Main, Elder, 12th and Liberty Streets, and Central Parkway) shared parking should be provided through lot consolidations and parcel assembly for structured parking. Ideally, these locations would be located mid-block, shielded from street frontage, perhaps by other uses, and situated in existing urban service areas away from concentrated housing districts. Illustration provided by the design consultants.

Figure 3: Concept map created from charettes. By Consultant - Design team..

SUMMARY OF PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of the recommendations presented in the plan.

Key Issues

1. Lack of economic investment
2. Potential for displacement of low-income residents
3. Crime and the perception of the area as being unsafe
4. Lack of a sense of an integrated community

Existing Conditions

1. Significant population losses (38% between 1980-2000) occurring at all income levels
2. 80% of families living below the poverty level in 1990
3. Very dense, mixed land use patterns
4. Approximately 5200 existing housing units in varying states of repair, with the capacity for up to 7500 (new and renovated)
5. Historic Districts and Urban Renewal District in place

Total Housing Units In Over-The-Rhine				
Rental or Mortgage Costs	1-5 Years	5 - 10 Years	10 - 15 Years	15 - 20 Years
Market Rate Housing				
Unlimited	20%	20%	20%	25%
61% to 100% of AMI (\$60,500 in 2001)	20%	20%	30%	25%
Affordable Housing				
31% to 60% of AMI (\$36,500 in 2001)	20%	35%	25%	25%
Up to 30% of AMI (\$18,150 in 2001)	40%	25%	25%	25%

Figure 4: Proposed Housing Strategy

Housing Goals and Key Recommendations

Goals

1. Encourage and welcome new investment at all income levels of the housing market and ensure the long-term sustainability of enough affordable housing to house current residents
2. Provide appropriate housing-related services for all residents
3. Protect, preserve and enhance the significant landmarks and areas of OTR's historic, architectural and cultural heritage without displacement

Key Recommendations

1. Establish the Mixed Income Housing Model that provides for balanced housing opportunities (see Figure 4)
2. Give priority to Mixed Income Projects.
3. Provide homeownership opportunities at all income levels
4. Support the rental housing market by upgrading rental housing
5. Create larger family units at all income levels
6. Project Improvements
 - Vine Street - 1200 block
 - Vine Street - 1300 block ReSTOC
 - Pendleton Mews
 - Melindy Square
 - Washington Park
 - Mulberry/Rothenberg Area infill
 - Findlay Market Area Housing



1. Reinforce network of pedestrian oriented alleys and tertiary streets
2. Future public plaza for extension of market activities
3. Underground parking
4. Existing new infill housing clusters with secure internal courtyards
5. Reconfigure east end of Elder Street for better connection to McMicken Street
6. Reconfigure Benton Street to accommodate outdoor public space for use by proposed restaurant

Figure 5: Promote the redevelopment of existing buildings or the development of new buildings in clusters that provide both a critical mass of improvement, and semi-public green spaces in the numerous internal courtyard spaces present throughout the district. When created by the surrounds of a cluster of 4-6 buildings, the inner block spaces may be controlled by the residents, providing a “defensible space” improved with landscaping, play areas and other resident amenities. The result of this arrangement promotes a sense of “ownership,” and becomes the building blocks of community identity. These potential clusters are plentiful in the Findlay Market residential district and in the northern portion of the Washington Park residential district. In other areas of the Washington Park residential district, block geometry is more suitable to a “mews” type linear clustering of semi-public green space, and private “back yards garden district” along existing mid-block alleys that may function similarly.

Carefully define and periodically adjust the delineation of public, semi-public, and private residential spaces in accordance with ongoing growth and development. While the pedestrian through-block network of alleys, pathways, and tertiary streets proposed is intended to promote connectivity between residential “clusters” and other parts of the district, a subtle delineation of public, semi-public, and private residential spaces must articulate this network to ensure resident comfort and safety. By Consultant - Design Team.

Economic Development

Goals

1. Make OTR a model for diverse and inclusive business development
2. Establish a better link between the OTR workforce and the job training and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and throughout the region
3. Strengthen and create cultural and other destinations that attract and encourage neighborhood and regional participation
4. Ensure the opportunity for OTR residents to become financially literate and independent

Key Recommendations

1. The Vine Street Project
 - Façade Renovation Program
 - Smart Streets
 - Neighborhood Pride Center
 - Vine Street Coordinator
 - Streetscape and pocket parking improvements
 - Vine Street 1700 Block Improvements
 - Empire Theater Renovation
2. Renovation of Findlay Market
3. The Loft District
4. Job Training and Linkages
5. Create Entrepreneurial Opportunities
 - Historic Building Trades
 - Food and Related Industries
 - Arts Industries
6. Support Technology-Based Investments
7. Create Additional Parking

Safety and Cleanliness

Goal

1. OTR will be safe, clean and visually appealing for residents and visitors

Key Recommendations

1. Improve appearance
2. Rebuild trust between community and police
3. Increase jobs and recreational activities for neighborhood youth
4. Weed and Seed “type” program
5. Support Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP)

Transportation

Goals

1. Facilitate both local and through travel
2. Improve public transit access for residents
3. Encourage more pedestrian friendly roadway and pathway networks
4. Increase off-street and on-street parking opportunities without impacting the urban fabric or historic character of the neighborhood

Key Recommendations

1. Endorse some sort of rail transit in the neighborhood
2. Endorse the MetroMoves Plan
3. Seek inclusion in the Central Area Loop Plan
4. Support a transit hub at Liberty and Vine Streets
5. Enhance streetscape and pedestrian environment on Liberty Street and Central Parkway
6. Improve pedestrian crosswalks and stairways throughout the area
7. Support construction of two parking structures (Music Hall and Main Street/ Ziegler area)
8. Create small scale parking lots on Vine Street and in other locations where appropriate
9. Make a series of specific traffic improvements



1. New Washington Park Elementary School with greenspace connection to Washington Park
2. Mixed-use and parking in Vine Street Gateway Project
3. Proposed location for Art Academy of Cincinnati
4. Shielded internal block surface parking in transition zone between Vine Street and Walnut Street
5. Maintain street frontage and provide mixed-use infill development on Vine Street
6. School for Creative and Performing Arts
7. Parking below extended Washington Park
8. Through-block pedestrian alley connections
9. Structured urban landscape in residual spaces on south side of Liberty Street
10. Existing and new infill housing clusters with secure internal landscaped courtyards
11. Landscape alley mews

Figure 6: Opportunities to expand and add to existing community green space should be pursued. This includes situations where major new public facilities are developed (such as the possible new Washington Park School). The incorporation of new public green space in the development is encouraged, especially where it can be connecting to other green spaces. Pocket parks are important at strategic locations throughout the neighborhood that support both passive green space and playgrounds. These are especially important in more densely residential areas and would enhance the smaller scale residential tertiary streets such as Pleasant, Republic, and Clay (along which some already exist). Pocket parks on tertiary streets where they cross liberty will provide pedestrian gateways to residential districts from this major arterial.

The less formal and fractured street frontage of Liberty (especially on the south side), can, because of residual spaces created by irregular geometry, accommodate small proprietary convenience surface parking lots that serve the needs of auto oriented retail

and service business. (see commercial themes) These can also be provided on the part of Central Parkway north of 14th. Wherever possible proprietary convenience parking should be situated behind buildings. Using residual spaces along the length of the street, a densely structured urban landscape can be created on the south side of Liberty than can not only screen and buffer, but provide spatial character as a pedestrian friendly green border for the street.

Parking for residential use should be provided in each sub-neighborhood, with particular attention paid to how it may be configured to support multifamily building clusters and single family owner occupied housing. Small "pocket" shared surface parking lots can support some multi-family building clusters. "Pocket" shared surface parking may be substituted for infill development in some, but not all cases, of the secondary and tertiary streets, depending on location, benefit, and existing density of the surrounding built environment.

By Consultant - Design Team..

Quality of Life

Goals

1. Create and maintain open space and green space that serves the whole community
2. Establish parks and recreational areas and centers that are accessible, well maintained and meet the needs of the community
3. Establish OTR schools as community anchors that provide outstanding educational opportunities that meet the needs of all residents, young and old
4. Encourage and support a diverse mix of cultural organizations and destinations
5. Create a clean visually appealing neighborhood

Key Recommendations

1. Renovate Rothenberg Elementary School as a school
2. Construct new Washington Park Elementary School
3. Construct new School for the Creative and Performing Arts
4. Improve existing parks and recreation areas
5. Renovate OTR Recreation Center
6. Create new greenspace at the old SCPA and add additional community gardens
7. Plant trees on key pedestrian streets
8. Promote OTR as an arts and cultural hub
9. Coordinate the SCPA/Music Hall /Washington Park complex
10. Relocate Art Academy of Cincinnati
11. Enhance and promote Pendleton Arts Center



Figure 7: Landscape screening and buffers are important throughout the neighborhood where they can screen and separate parking and other uses. This is especially true where existing and new surface parking is proposed. Surface parking should always be screened from street view with landscaping and wrought iron fencing as prescribed in the historic conservation guidelines. Along the south side of Liberty Street, irregular geometries allow for landscaped screening for existing parking lots (between Main and Walnut Streets) and possible new proprietary surface parking lots. By Consultant - Design Team..

Key Implementation Strategies

- Create an umbrella Community Development Corporation to initiate and oversee plan implementation
- Package financing tools to facilitate housing and economic development projects
- Support early start projects
- Support the school planning and construction activities
- Develop a property acquisition program and Land Banking
- Establish a TIF district as a long-term targeted funding mechanism
- Engage existing service providers with a role to play in implementation

OVER-THE-RHINE PRIORITY PROJECTS

The City is committed to the implementation of this Plan. The following projects are consistent with the recommendations, are currently underway and are expected to be completed within the next 2-3 years.

Housing Recommendations Phase One Committed Projects Completed by the end of 2004

Complete Pendleton Mews (OTR Foundation- Verdin)

20 single-family homeownership units (17 market rate, 3 affordable)

City to furnish infrastructure improvements and streetscape enhancements

City investment: \$859,000

Private investment: \$2,900,000

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete Melindy Square (Miami Purchase Preservation – Urban Sites)

61 rehabilitated homeownership units, market rate

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1200 Block of Vine Street

Rehabilitation of a series of buildings that will include up to 25 market rate housing units and commercial space. The project will be put out to bid by Cincinnati Development Fund (CDF) and also includes a number of private owners.

Investments and schedule to be determined

Model Management Tax Credit Project

Project to renovate buildings on Vine and Race and reduce the overall density of low-income units

24 affordable units

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Community Views

15 efficiency to four bedroom units on scattered sites throughout Over-the-Rhine and Mohawk. (5 market rate, 10 affordable)

Project under review

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Complete 1300 Vine Street (ReSTOC)

30 rehabilitated, affordable rental units

City provided gap financing

City investment \$770,000

Other investment: \$3,675,000

Scheduled completion: 2003

East 15th Street Project

28 rehabilitated units, 5 affordable

City investment: \$69,900

Private investment: \$1,500,000

Scheduled completion: 2004

Complete Findlay Market Housing (Scheer and Scheer)

Rehabilitation of 10 homeownership units in 7 buildings and
4 market rate rental units in 1 building

City investment: \$1,072,523

Other investment \$2,780,000

Scheduled completion: 2004

Miscellaneous Smaller Housing Projects

City is working with a number of housing developers on over 8
other smaller housing projects including; Reading Lofts, Conroy
street, Park Hill, Mulberry Views, Christian Stollmaier Building,
13th Street, 1400 block of Walnut Street and Mercer Street

These projects include 53 additional units; 4 affordable

Total City investment: \$1,751,300

Total private investment: \$9,826,000

Summary of Housing Investments

Total city investment: \$ 4,922,000

Total private investment: \$23,581,000

Economic Development Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Façade Improvement Program

Smart Streets/ Lead Remediation

10 Buildings funded for façade improvements, lead work and retail
space improvements City investment:

\$300,000 Façade

\$92,162 lead abatement

\$396,000 additional lead grant from HUD (pending)

Total public investment: \$788,162

Scheduled completion: Winter 2002

Neighborhood Pride Center

Includes offices of Vine Street Coordinator

Coordination of Police, Buildings, Public Services Economic De-
velopment, and other City services (a commitment to Clean and
Safe in OTR)

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Findlay Market, Market House Expansion and Public Improvements

Expansion will double the size of the market and add food vendor
space

City Investment: \$12,000,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Neighborhood Craft Market

Outdoor Vendor Space for residents to sell homemade crafts at
Findlay Market

Anticipated investment: \$50,000

Scheduled completion: Summer of 2003

Empire Theater Renovation

Theater Renovation for live music and arts performances

City Investment: \$150,000

Private and State of Ohio Investment: \$850,000

Scheduled completion: End of 2002

1700 Block of Vine Target Renovations

City providing site assembly and building stabilization

RFP to be issued in summer 2002 to include proposals for rehabili-
tation and in-fill construction at 1701,03,05,07 – 1712,1714,1718
– 1721,23,25, and 1735,37,39.

City investment and private investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: To be determined

Streetscape and Parking Enhancements on Vine Street

Installation of street trees, landscape planters, and flower boxes

Improvements to various parking lots

City Investment: \$20,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Food Venture Center at Findlay Market

Shared use commercial kitchen located at 1638 Central Parkway
(city-owned facility)

FDA and USDA certified facility

Entrepreneurial development for food-based businesses

\$3,000,000 facility

Anticipated partners; City, State, Federal and Private Sources

Summary of Economic Development Investments

Total City Investment: \$12,520,000

The majority of these investments are on public facilities and infrastructure and do not have accompanying private investments. Those projects that will also include private investment are currently being developed.

Safety and Cleanliness Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Implement the Community Problem-Oriented Policing program

The Police are actively implementing the CPOP program in Over-the-Rhine and throughout the City.

City investment: \$1 Million each year for five years city-wide. Although this investment is city-wide, OTR will receive significant benefit.

Provide Additional Level of Clean-up

The City is currently conducting significant additional clean up activity with city crews and contracting with Impact OTR, New Prospect, and other service providers to provide trash pick-up in vacant lots, on Vine Street and other locations in the neighborhood.

City investment: \$800,000

Transportation Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Vine Street Circulation Study

Study to determine the best traffic circulation patterns for Vine Street including consideration for transit and enhanced bus service

City investment: \$33,000

Implement Traffic System Management (TSM) Upgrades

Implementation of a number of specific traffic enhancement including: Mohawk left turn

Investment to be determined

Quality of Life Phase One Committed Projects

To be completed by 2004

Hanna Park Improvements

Enhancements to include a “Sprayground” and other improvements

City Investment: \$200,000

Private Funds, Armleder Trust: \$985,000

Federal investment: \$500,000

Total investment: \$1,685,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2003

Grant Park Improvements

New equipment, updated basketball courts, additional trees and landscaping

City investment: \$200,000

Scheduled completion: Spring 2003

Washington Park Improvements

Upgrade restrooms, enhance lighting, install “Community Art Bench”

Bench is a project between CRC, Park Board, Contact Center, Peaslee Center, and Art Academy of Cincinnati

City investment: \$17,000

Partners investment: \$15,000

Scheduled completion: Summer 2002

Rebuild Washington Park Elementary School

New school immediately south of Washington Park

Restore current site back into park space

Cincinnati Public Schools investment: \$16,000,000

Scheduled completion: Open for the 2004 school year

Establish the New Entrepreneurial High School

Located with the Cincinnati Business Incubator on Central Parkway

Cincinnati Public Schools/ Gates Foundation Grant

Scheduled completion: Open for 2003 school year

Construct Parking Garage for Washington Park School/Music Hall Complex

Development of additional parking at the Town Center Garage to serve Music Hall, the new School for the Performing Arts, and the new Washington Park School

Partners include the Cincinnati Public Schools, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the City of Cincinnati, and other to be determined

Investment to be determined

Scheduled completion: Open in 2003-4

Summary of Quality of Life Investments

Total City Investment: \$417,000

School Board and other investments: \$17,500,000

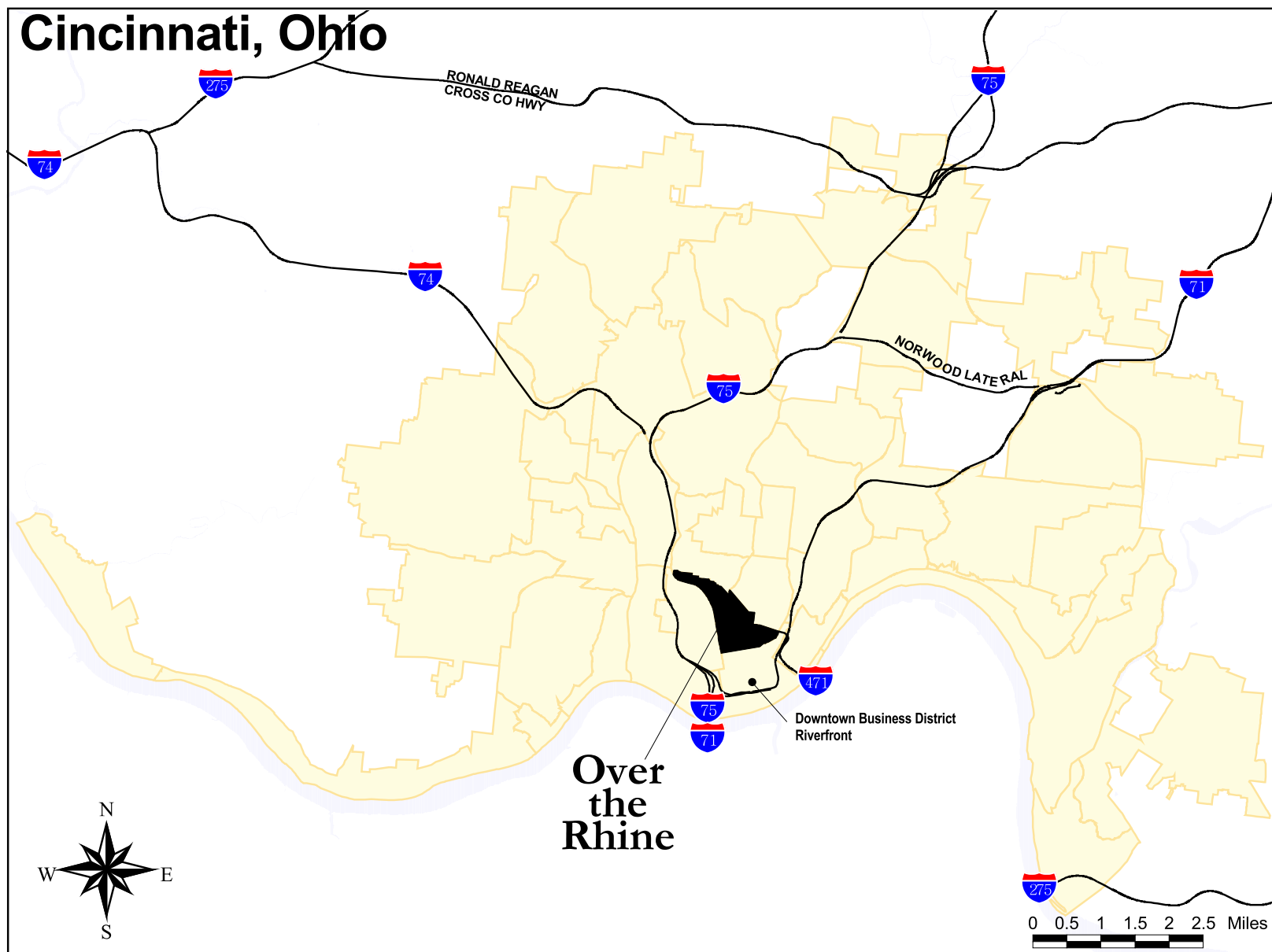


Figure 8: Over-the-Rhine's location in the City of Cincinnati.